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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC (F. CORNEILLE) AND
EEB/ESC/IEC (M.MCMANUS)
DEPARTMENT PASS TO DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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SUBJECT: BARBADOS RELEASES DRAFT ENERGY POLICY

REF: 06 BRIDGETOWN 1852

SUMMARY

1. The Ministry of Energy and the Environment of the Government of Barbados (GOB) recently unveiled its draft National Energy Policy and invited a wide range of stakeholders to provide comments and suggestions. The proposed policy's priorities include energy conservation, alternative energy development, and drilling. In light of the muted response to the new policy, it will likely be adopted without controversy. Post will transmit via email a copy of the draft National Energy Policy to the Department. End Summary.

THE NEW POLICY

2. Elizabeth Thompson, the GOB Minister of Energy and the Environment, unveiled the draft Barbados National Energy Policy on January 11. The 64-page document addresses the following energy challenges and priorities: fuel prices, dependence on fossil fuels, development of a renewable energy sector, establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework, research and development, environment protection, and investment promotion. The draft policy announced long-rumored plans for expanding onshore and offshore drilling for natural gas and oil. The GOB also plans to conclude a deal with Trinidad and Tobago for future natural gas supplies. One noteworthy feature of the draft policy is the inclusion of specific target dates by which certain projects and policy goals are to be implemented. Once the public review process is completed, it will be submitted for another round of cabinet and parliamentary reviews.

THE NON-DEBATE

3. The new draft policy includes nothing controversial and spurred little debate in the parliament. Some members of parliament encouraged the government to devote more attention to developing the renewable energy sector, others suggested the plan lacked sufficient focus on energy conservation. In a pre-election season, where the opposition Democratic Labour Party is looking for opportunities to pounce on the Barbados Labour Party government, the draft energy policy's anti-climactic debut shows that this draft energy policy, which essentially amounts to a "motherhood and apple pie" list of proposals, will likely face smooth passage when it comes to parliament for a final vote.

COMMENT

14. The GOB's draft National Energy Policy includes the right mix of proposals on alternative energy, conservation, as well as offshore and onshore drilling. Barbados' energy consumption has been steadily rising with increased tourism, construction and vehicle usage. Actual implementation of the plan, however, is bound to raise more debate, since most of the envisioned projects come with a hefty price tag. Barbados does not have the resources, public or private, to undertake large-scale energy projects. As the country moves forward with the new energy policy, the United States is well positioned to play a role, especially in alternative and renewable energy projects.

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